



12. The Indian University System in the Knowledge Age: A metamorphosis

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ABSTRACT:

The article examines the state of Indian universities and higher education today and suggests changes that should be made for them to remain relevant in this contemporary age of knowledge. NEP 2020 is the frame work prepared to cater to both global and local requirements of Indian youth. It also gives guidelines to come out of the colonial suppression and recognize the Indian perspective of science, culture and economy. All these efforts combined together give a glimpse of future scenario for 21st century Indian Universities.

The article critically evaluates Indian university system for creating a strong framework for implementing the UN 2030 Declaration on Education and NEP 2020. The major finding of this study is that the present Higher Education scenario is system oriented.

A human-centered and humanitarian education is the most appropriate educational module to replace system-oriented education. A metamorphosis from system oriented education preoccupied with job hunt to humanitarian education is required to attain peace, harmony, and justice in all spheres of life. A module for Human centered Education for development of consciousness is proposed to achieve the metamorphosis.

Key words: NEP 2020; UN declaration 2030, Humanitarian Education; Indian University system; Educational reforms

Introduction:

‘If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we are robbing them of tomorrow’

This quote by the American philosopher John Dewey shows an ever changing flow of knowledge which empowers humanity to take up the challenges and sustain .The list of challenges that threaten local and global sustainability is lengthy.

The global financial and economic crisis highlights the risks of unsustainable economic development models and practices based on short-term gains. The food crisis and world hunger amount to an increasingly serious issue. Unsustainable production and consumption patterns are



creating ecological impacts that compromise the options of current and future generations, and indeed the sustainability of life on Earth, as climate change is demonstrating. To a large extent, it is these challenges that will shape a new definition of quality education and its implementation.

GLOBAL ACTION PROGRAMME:

The World Conference on Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century - Vision and Action was held in 1996-98). Four international experts - Hebe Vessuri, Donald Ekong, Malcolm Skilbeck and Dumitru Chitoran [vessuri, H. 1998; Ekong D 1998, Skilbeck M 1997; Chitoran D 1998) have prepared overviews of the Conference's four major themes, namely relevance for socio- political- economic vision for higher education and quality; to move towards harmonious, sustainable development and to correct imbalances. ("Think globally and act locally") includes the quality of staff, students, infrastructure, curriculum, applied research and management.

The five priority action areas identified by the Global Action Programme are as follows;

1. The first priority area highlights the crucial role of political policy in advancing a favorable environment for education for sustainable development.
2. The holistic transformation of learning and training settings is the goal of the second priority area. This can only come about by changing the values and structures of educational institutions to live sustainability.
3. The third priority area is about building the capacities of educators and trainers, enabling teachers to become "change agents" in implementing education for sustainable development.
4. The fourth priority area focuses on enabling and mobilizing youth for the development of political strategies and their implementation in the area of sustainable development.
5. The advancement of sustainable development at the local level is the fifth priority area of the Global Action Programme. Networks need to be created and developed in local communities, to work together to discuss and exchange ideas about sustainability,

UN DECLARATION (United Nations, 2015) [weblink UNDP]:

The United Nations' specialized agency for education is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to "*ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*"



The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments needs to be developed after a critical review of the Indian university system over the time as follows.

A COMAPRISON OF ANCIENT AND MODERN INDIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM:

Among the first institutions of higher learning in ancient India were the schools at Nalanda, Takshila, Pushpagiri, and Vikramshila. The modern rulers of their era supported these colleges, and the professors taught both Buddhist and Brahman philosophy, logic, law, and other subjects, regardless of their religious beliefs.

The earliest universities in modern times were established in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in 1858. Since the university was a colonial entity, its financial reliance and statues were subject to governmental hegemony. This continued even after 1947 since the statutory structure preserved the relationship between the corporate body of the government and the university.

Presently, the change in political regime, sectarian conflicts, and denial of patronage did not permit the kind of autonomy to the modern universities which was once observed in the ancient universities of India.

Features of ancient Indian universities:

- 1) Ancient universities were much more autonomous as they were not solely funded by the state. A university such as Nalanda was funded by the merchants, traders and the kings.
- 2) Universities in the past were far more welcoming to all students
- 3) A large number of international students from China, Sumatra, and other countries participated in these academic institutions.
- 4) The curriculum included subjects like science, law, and religion in addition to religion.
- 5) The universities saw a significant increase in their level of achievement on the global stage as they were taken care of by corporate entities.

Universities of modern states have some marked difference with the ancient universities:

1. Funding-

The modern universities are funded directly the government, ancient universities depended on grants and patronage.

2. Autonomy-



Owing to financial independence, ancient universities were autonomous in the true sense with no political interference. Because the state controls a large portion of the curriculum and fellowship, free thought and learning are not encouraged in our colleges.

3. Selection of Heads-

The heads of ancient universities were monks and men of learning, the appointments of the modern universities has been at times marred by controversies. The government appoints vice chancellors to universities, undermining their independence.

4. Curriculum-

The ancient universities have no defined curriculum and were versatile to the needs of the students, government dictates in the formulating curriculum for modern universities

5. Inclusiveness-

We haven't succeeded in making our universities genuinely inclusive. The reservation policy has undoubtedly resulted in a rise in the number of SC/ ST/ OBC and women candidates, yet they continue to experience significant prejudice in their universities.

Autonomy with some accountability is the only way out to make our universities compete with other European universities. However, frequent changes in political regime, sectarian conflicts and denial of patronage did not permit the institutional continuity which ultimately culminated by legislature enacted by the Britishers. The very purpose of the same was to serve the best interest of their continued rule in India.

The challenges faced by Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in India

- **Inadequate investments in higher education:** The government's expenditure on higher education is a mere 2.7% of the GDP against the recommended 6% by the Kothari Commission.
- **Disparities in access to higher education:** Empirical evidence points towards the persistence of economic, social, locational, and regional disparities in access to higher education.
- **Limitations in accreditation:** NAAC and NBA are currently reeling under the issue of inadequate capacity to bring all HEIs into the accreditation framework.
- **Learning outcomes and teaching outcomes:** Deficiency of prerequisites amongst students to take up programs and the subsequent failure to achieve desired outcomes is much prevalent.



- **Research and innovation:** India lags behind other countries in terms of research output, innovation, and patent registrations. Also there is a lack of adequate funding in research and innovation.
- **Lack of global standards of excellence:** This has a direct impact on India's capacity to reap its demographic dividend and acts as an impediment for HEIs to feature in top global rankings of institutions.
- **Limitations in attracting students from abroad:** India ranks third in the world in terms of having students pursuing higher education from abroad. However, globally, India occupies the 26th position among the top destinations for international student mobility.
- **Absence of convergence between higher education and the skill ecosystem:** Higher education contributes only 4% in offering skill training while the Ministry of Skill Development and Employment (MSDE) contributes 58%. The MSDE hasn't been involved in the higher education system either.

NEP 2020 RECOMMENDATIONS:

New education policy 'NEP 2020' is created to address the local and global needs of Indian youth. Additionally, it provides instructions for overcoming colonial oppression and acknowledging the Indian viewpoint on science, culture, and the economy. A future scenario is catch sight of when all of these efforts are put together.

Many states in India have implemented NEP 2020 [weblink NEP] . The following recommendations are included in the New Education Policy 2020. The Vision of NEP 2020 is as follows:

VISION:

- An education system rooted in Indian ethos
- transforming India, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, making India a global knowledge superpower.
- To develop knowledge, skills, values, that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.
- The curriculum and pedagogy of our institutions must develop a deep sense of respect towards the fundamental duties and Constitutional values, bonding with one's country, and a conscious awareness of one's roles and responsibilities in a changing world.

STRATEGIES:



- **Regulation and Accreditation**
 - Consolidating the regulatory structure of this sector by eliminating the overlapping regulations.
 - Widening the accreditation network and acknowledging the diversity of standards during the assessment.
- **Expanding access**
 - Enhancing access to vulnerable communities by providing scholarships, fee reimbursement, etc.
 - Expanding access to cater to geographically underserved areas through Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC) and Open and Distance Learning (ODL).
 - Promotion of Indian languages
- **Financing higher education**
 - Generating funds via new modes such as opening up of sophisticated research equipment to industry and other external users which will improve their utilization and also earn revenues.
 - Providing financial incentives like One-time financial grants to support filling up existing vacancies of faculty and One-time Catch-up grant to facilitate infrastructural up gradation.
- **Effective pedagogies and assessment practices**
 - Holistic Multidisciplinary Education with multiple exit options.
 - Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)
 - Student support systems, A National Mission for Mentoring shall be established
 - Formulating a National Higher Education Qualifications Framework and Learning Outcome-based Curriculum Framework.
 - Create institutional mechanisms for periodic review of curricula by formulating guidelines for implementation of the revised curriculum.
- **Promotion of research and innovation**
 - Building a robust ecosystem of research networks by reaching out to local higher education institutions.
 - Setting up a research funding body at the national level, this aims at achieving excellence in knowledge creation, people, and Research & Innovation infrastructure.
- **Skills, Employability, and Entrepreneurship**
 - Incorporating a formal vocational education structure into the college system with a credit structure that applies to both vocational and non-vocational education.



- Revamping the curriculum for vocational education to incorporate skill courses with credits.
- **Technology for better reachability**
 - Promoting Research in Educational Technologies by setting up Centers of Excellence (CoE) in premier Institutions along with Incubation support facility for startups.
 - Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities(MERUs)
 - Developing platforms using AI that could offer personalized learning paths, adaptive assessments, and real-time progress tracking to enhance the learning experience and outcomes.
- **Internationalization of higher education**
 - Expanding academic collaboration with Higher Education Institutions abroad for knowledge sharing and research collaboration.
 - Promoting program mobility and cross-border delivery of higher education programs.
- **Focus of Teacher training:**
 - Rationalized Institutional Architecture eg. Research intensive
 - Teaching-intensive and Autonomous degree granting Colleges (ACs)
 - Teacher Education, Accountability, Incentivize for performance

METAMORPHOSIS NEEDED FOR INDIAN UNIVERSITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING NEP 2020:

NEP 2020 has been appreciated by one and all. It is still in its initial stages. A critical evaluation can be done after a certain period of time. However the implementation part is to be taken care of. The mind set of educators, students and parents are to be changed for successfully implementing the policy. People fear that this policy may lead to joblessness as the focus has been shifted from imparting education on core courses to a broader range of miscellaneous subjects.

If we try to merge the goals of NEP 2020 and UN 2030 declaration, we need to incorporate a few profound concepts in our university systems. The education shall be designed for for Sustainability. There is a need to restructure and redesign the curriculum with a focus on sustainability rather than focusing on subject specialization. We need to educate our children for the future. There will be recession, Climate change, Technology Singularity. We need to teach them how to handle finances, how to take care of their health, how to work in a diverse group and how to upgrade themselves through life-long learning.

THE ETYMOLOGICAL CRISIS OF HIGHER EDUCATION:



Even with these changes, should we anticipate a fundamental shift in education?

Higher education institutions operate in diverse environments that are rapidly changing as a result of processes like internationalisation, regionalization, democratisation, mass phenomena development, relocation of economic activity, marginalisation, fragmentation, and technology diffusion. We must deal with the real-time assessment of our era.

We witness people suffering from mental illness and personality disorders, a broken social structure, international strife, and our planet approaching a point of no return as a result of over-exploitation of its resources. We need to address the conflicts and paradoxes like:

- Existence of an informal economy coexisting with a strong push towards economic globalization.
- Increase in demand with high population growth of developing nations but cut off in financial, material and human resources of HEIs
- The mechanisms of exclusion are strengthened. Women and rural students are still under-represented and outnumbered on the scientific and technological side). The growing divide between developed and developing nations.
- Quality of Education and training is being raised but employability of graduate students is going down. The challenges of finding work without a minimum degree, which makes education more time-consuming
- Higher education needs to be internationalized, but they have to address to respond both to regional requirements to protect cultural and linguistic identity.
- Extraordinary developments in the technologies, but they are under-utilized due to lack of training
- Number of qualified researchers increased but, High impact research is missing less society oriented research is being carried out

Since both vision and action need to be situated, it is crucial to transcend contradictions when addressing these paradoxical changes that are affecting society and, by extension, higher education. To do this, one should be inclusive and cater to diversities. Beneath this diversity, though, were some fundamental need shared by all people. Because of this, if vision and action are to be located, they must come from a global vision that conceives of the structuring of a more just and equal society.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT:

The present education system has become largely system-based largely escalating from the human beings for which the system was evolved. The prime emphasis is on



science and technology and skills. However, science and technology can only help to provide the means to achieve what is considered valuable in terms of facilities.

Education shall focus on building human beings with a positive mindset, who takes responsibility for the family, society and the environment. Education for sustainability is a crucial missing link in the present education system. Because of this deficiency, most of our efforts may prove to be counterproductive manifesting serious crises at the individual, societal and environmental level in future society.

MODULE FOR ATTAINING UNIVERSAL VISION OF A UNIVERSITY:

Humanitarianism is an ideology centered on the value of human life, whereby humans practice benevolent treatment and provide assistance to other humans to reduce suffering and improve the conditions of humanity for moral, altruistic, and emotional reasons. Humanitarian education teaches various social topics from a humanitarian perspective. A desire to reduce suffering, save lives and maintain human dignity is central to understand humanitarian education. It is based on the assumption that people have an innate desire to help others, so is centrally concerned with our shared humanity [Tawil S 2002].

Curriculum content shall develop their understanding of humanitarian issues, the skills that build resilience and encourages them to intervene to support others in crisis. Humanitarian education enables students to recognize that people can overcome adversities, challenges and threats in the society.

The way in which educators explore with students any topic, issue or event must be within the framework of the principles of humanity and impartiality. It does not directly address causes and explicitly avoids exploring political, religious, social class, nationality, economic, environmental or other factors that might contribute to or create a crisis [Bajpai BL 2004; Dhar PL 1990; Tripathy AN 2003].

VISION OF HUMANITARIAN EDUCATION

Humanitarian Education is a transformation from Animal Consciousness to Human Consciousness. Education shall empower us to grow from a small confined self to universal self, from purely Individualistic being to useful member of a Family, a complimentary unit to the society, nation and universe and Realization of



connectedness of whole coexistence. The education shall lead a person with Thoughts of resolution, Just Behavior with the family/ society/ globe and impart values to work with nature with harmony striking a balance everywhere [Nagraj A 1998] .

A humane society is composed of families living together in a relationship of mutual fulfillment. The key is the development of right understanding and right thought in every individual by way of humane education; and, of course, the practice of living accordingly. Such a society would make effort for a common, humane goal, which can be articulated as:

- Happiness in every individual (developing right understanding and right thought)
- Prosperity in every family (producing ample physical resources by joint labour of all family members, using cyclic and mutually enriching natural processes)
- Fearlessness in society (practicing justice in human- human relationship)
- Co-existence in nature/existence (ensuring harmony with the natural/existential laws in all processes)

As a whole, this can be called humane education. This is both, the expectation from as well as the responsibility of the parents/elders, teachers and responsible people/systems of the society.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Developing a holistic perspective of life.
- To observe complementarity of – individual, family, society and nature/existence.
- To strengthen self-reflection.
- To develop confidence and commitment to understand, learn and act accordingly.

PROGRAMME EDUCATION OBJECTIVE (PEO) OF HUMANITARIAN EDUCATION:



A human centered education will develop teaching modules to facilitate human beings and will modify itself as per their need, rather than imposing a rigid system in which everyone has to fit in. The program outcome of the whole education shall be reformed to address all the dimensions necessary to evolve a human being in order to realize their full potential and leading to a life full of stable and happy relationship with family, society and universe as a whole.

PEO 1: Humane Education system to attain human consciousness

PEO2: Circular economical system, mindfully using natural resources and give back to nature.

PEO3: Fair Exchange in exchange of thoughts, behavior, money and in every transaction

PEO4: Human Constitution and Justice and security system

PEO5: Health and Healthy living with limiting our needs and consume mindfully.

These five dimensions of life are to be addressed through education for evolving a human being who can lead a life in harmony with other human beings as well as nature.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The humanitarian education shall give learners an opportunity to realize their full potential without judging as follows:

PO1: Excellence in knowledge, wisdom with a scientific temperament

PO2: Proficiency in relational skills

PO3: Expertise in occupational skills

PO4: Enable Sociability in behavior

PO5: Self Reliant in occupation

PEDOGOGY

A self-reflective methodology of teaching is adopted. It facilitates understanding through self-exploration. The dialogue starts between the faculty and the student. It opens the space for the student to explore his/her role (value) in all aspects of living – as an individual, as a member of a family, as a part of the society and as an unit in nature



Through this process of self-exploration, students are able to discover the values intrinsic in them.

- Pedagogy for Pre Primary Education: Obedience, following and mimicking instructions
- Pedagogy for Primary: Discipline, Self-discipline.
- Pedagogy for Middle School: ascription, attribution , conviction
- Pedagogy for High School: comparison, analysis contemplation
- Pedagogy for Higher Education: Realization, experience, evidence.

EVALUATION PROCESS:

The evaluation process shall be majorly based on self-evaluation, self- reflection and evaluation by peers, parents, employers and society as a whole. The students shall be evaluated on the basis of the following benchmarks;

1. Evidence of Understanding

- Knowledge (Understanding of mechanistic logics)
- Wisdom(Understanding of purpose)
- Science(Understanding of Process, Laws)

2. Evidence in Behavior

- Proficiency in relationship skills
- Complementarity in each relationship
- Mutual satisfaction in each relationship
- Justice (Let live and Live)

3. Evidence in Profession

- Proficiency in occupational skills
- To be self-reliant, create prosperity in the family and society
- Fulfilling all physical needs without misusing the resources, leaving the earth unharmed
- To become solution oriented looking for sustainable universal solutions

ACTION PLAN FOR METAMORPHOSIS:



The action plan for a Paradigm Shift in Education will address every prospect involving all the processes from curriculum design, pedagogies, exam and evaluation to all the stake holders including students, teachers, parents and the society as a whole as compiled in the table below:

Present Model	Transformation
subject centered approach	Real world approach
Fragmented	Holistic, inter/ multi-disciplinary
Prepare students for job market	Prepare students to be self-reliant, and lives in harmony with self, family , society and nature
Information dominating	Deep understanding, creativity , evidence in living
Exams and tests	Holistic evaluation, self-evaluation
Individualistic	Collaborative and interdependent
Passive learning	Active/ inspired learning

CONCLUSIONS:

With the most complex architecture and the highest degree of consciousness discovered in the natural world, humans are the most amazing creation in the universe. Thus, it is everyone's responsibility to live in peace and balance with the natural environment. A student needs to be ready to pick up the abilities required to explore his consciousness and the inherent human traits. This will be the aim of education. Value-based education for awareness development is a human-centered approach to creating a universal order.

Comprehensive, integrated education and concentrated, disciplinary study have become more at odds in recent years, particularly during recessions such as the one that began in 2008. Both



parents and students are focusing more and more of their plans and ambitions on a career-driven approach, emphasising fields where employment straight out of school seems more lucrative and certain.

Ironically, a lot of businesses are starting to respect integrated education more and more, especially in "high tech" industries where skills like critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and lifelong learning are emphasised.

With the speed at which artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, communications, and other technological fields are developing, graduates will need a special set of transferable skills in order to learn how to work continuously and adaptably in the establishment of a new economic order in the upinfluence with new technologies.

We are in a period of transition, and the Economists promoting circular economy predict that in the coming years, a new economic order will be built. This new order will be based on human needs rather than job prospects or the economy.

We conclude by stating that this will be a positive transformation for education and the global university system.

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